



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

JONATHAN A. HARRIS | COMMISSIONER

Testimony of Jonathan A. Harris Commissioner of Consumer Protection

General Law Committee Public Hearing, February 21, 2017

H.B. 7052 “AN ACT PREVENTING PRESCRIPTION OPIOID DIVERSION AND ABUSE”

Senator Leone, Senator Witkos, Representative Baram, Representative Smith and Honorable Members of the General Law Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of HB 7052, An Act Preventing Prescription Opioid Diversion and Abuse.

H.B. 7052 “AN ACT PREVENTING PRESCRIPTION OPIOID DIVERSION AND ABUSE”

The Department appreciates the opportunity to express enthusiastic support for the Governor’s proposed legislation to strengthen the tools in the ongoing fight to combat the prescription drug abuse epidemic.

Connecticut, like many so many other States throughout the country, continues to combat the issue of drug diversion, misuse and addiction. No one is immune. Whether it is a street drug such as heroin or prescription pain medications, all of us know someone - a friend, neighbor or family member - who has been directly affected by this crisis.

DCP, in collaboration with Governor Malloy's Office, our sister agencies, and various stakeholders and organizations, continuously evaluates current laws and practices to identify gaps in our system that should be filled. This proposal would:

- Allow for the Commissioner of Consumer Protection to enter into agreements with heads of other state agencies to provide controlled substance prescription information obtained through the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) for the purpose of studying disease prevention and control related to opioid abuse or morbidity and mortality caused by overdoses of controlled substances;
- Allow registered nurses employed by home health care agencies, along with designated patient representatives, to oversee the destruction and disposal of patients' controlled substances, using the recommendations for the proper disposal of prescription drugs on the Internet web site of the Department of Consumer Protection;
- Require that all prescriptions for controlled substances be transmitted electronically to a pharmacy, and require that the pharmacies have the technology to accept the electronic prescription;
- Require the Department of Public Health, in consultation with DCP and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, to create a voluntary nonopioid directive form so that any individual who does not wish to be issued a prescription for an opioid drug may file such form with their prescribing practitioners;
- Create a process for patients and practitioners to implement the orders of a voluntary nonopioid directive; and
- Require that practitioners, when prescribing an opioid drug to an adult or minor patient, discuss with the patient the risks associated with the use of opioid drugs.

Based on our Drug Control Division's day-to-day experiences, the Department believes this proposal is a sensible and necessary approach as we continue to tackle this widespread crisis.

I am proud of the work of my agency and the role the Department is playing in combating drug abuse. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of all stakeholders, the problem continues to grow. As a result, more must be done. The bill before you today is an essential next step in the State's ongoing efforts to address the problem of drug diversion and misuse. I hope you will join me in supporting its passage.

Thank you again for allowing us to provide information about this proposal. Please let me, or our Legislative Director, Leslie O'Brien, know if you have any questions.